

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE RESOURCES STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 24, 2021

1:01 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Josiah Patkotak, Chair
Representative Grier Hopkins, Vice Chair
Representative Zack Fields
Representative Calvin Schrage
Representative Sara Hannan
Representative George Rauscher
Representative Mike Cronk
Representative Ronald Gillham
Representative Tom McKay

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT

Senator Josh Revak

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE BILL NO. 22

"An Act repealing the termination date for the intensive management hunting license surcharge."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 22

SHORT TITLE: INTENSIVE MGMT SURCHARGE/REPEAL TERM DATE

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) REVAK

01/22/21	(S)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/8/21
01/22/21	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/22/21	(S)	RES, FIN
02/12/21	(S)	RES AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
02/12/21	(S)	-- MEETING CANCELED --
02/15/21	(S)	RES AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
02/15/21	(S)	Moved SB 22 Out of Committee
02/15/21	(S)	MINUTE(RES)

02/17/21	(S)	RES RPT 3DP 2NR
02/17/21	(S)	DP: REVAK, STEVENS, MICCICHE
02/17/21	(S)	NR: KIEHL, KAWASAKI
03/02/21	(S)	FIN AT 9:00 AM SENATE FINANCE 532
03/02/21	(S)	Heard & Held
03/02/21	(S)	MINUTE(FIN)
03/08/21	(S)	FIN RPT 5DP
03/08/21	(S)	DP: STEDMAN, BISHOP, WILSON, OLSON, VON IMHOF
03/08/21	(S)	FIN AT 9:00 AM SENATE FINANCE 532
03/08/21	(S)	Moved SB 22 Out of Committee
03/08/21	(S)	MINUTE(FIN)
03/10/21	(S)	TRANSMITTED TO (H)
03/10/21	(S)	VERSION: SB 22
03/12/21	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/12/21	(H)	RES, FIN
03/24/21	(H)	RES AT 1:00 PM BARNES 124

WITNESS REGISTER

SENATOR JOSH REVAK
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor, introduced SB 22.

EMMA TORKELSON, Staff
Senator Josh Revak
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided information on SB 22 on behalf of Senator Revak, prime sponsor.

EDDIE GRASSER, Director
Division of Wildlife Conservation
Department of Fish & Game
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 22.

JOHN STURGEON, Director
Safari Club International, Alaska Chapter
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 22.

KEVIN KEHOE, President
Alaska Wild Sheep Foundation
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 22.

SAM ROHRER, President
Alaska Professional Hunters Association
Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 22.

ACTION NARRATIVE

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CHAIR JOSIAH PATKOTAK called the House Resources Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. Representatives Hopkins, Schrage, Hannan, Rauscher, Gilham, Cronk, McKay, and Patkotak were present at the call to order. Representative Fields arrived as the meeting was in progress.

SB 22-INTENSIVE MGMT SURCHARGE/REPEAL TERM DATE

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CHAIR PATKOTAK announced that the only order of business would be SB 22, "An Act repealing the termination date for the intensive management hunting license surcharge."

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SENATOR JOSH REVAK, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, introduced SB 22. He described SB 22 as a "sunset bill" that would repeal the termination date for the intensive management hunting license surcharge. He said that this bill was requested by the sportsman's community and is a revenues bill that would bring in funds for the state; the surcharges, as opposed to general fund money, would fund the intensive management of wildlife populations. He explained that "importantly, it would be used to leverage the Pittman Robertson Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act (16 U.S.C. 669-669i; 50 Stat. 917) of September 2, 1937, ("Pittman-Robertson Act") 75/25 matching dollars for the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G), "so one million dollars in this user fee gets us three million in return." He noted that, to date, he has heard of no opposition to this SB 22.

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EMMA TORKELSON, Staff, Senator Josh Revak, Alaska State Legislature, provided information on SB 22 on behalf of Senator Revak, prime sponsor. She explained the intensive management

program, which identifies when a population of moose, deer, or caribou falls below a level sustainable enough to allow people to hunt; it identifies the cause and plans ways of addressing the issue, such as habitat enhancement. She said that prior to 2016, capital project appropriations funded this program, but since then it's been funded by surcharges on hunting licenses plus matching grants stemming from the Pittman-Robertson Act; the surcharge accounts for approximately \$1 million per year and the grants account for approximately \$3 million. She said that if the surcharge is allowed to sunset, intensive management costs would then be borne by the state. She noted that the intensive management program promotes food security for the Alaska population.

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EDDIE GRASSER, Director, Division of Wildlife Conservation, Department of Fish & Game, testified in support of SB 22. He gave a brief history of the Intensive Management (IM) Law, which requires and (ADF&G) and the Board of Game to identify wild game populations and ensure that they're large enough to provide food security for Alaska residents through sustained harvest. He said hunters requested an IM surcharge due to the success of the state-conducted IM programs, which increased the population of caribou and moose; the request, he said, was made to ensure that funds were dedicated and available to assess and conduct IM activities. He said that revenue from the IM totaled approximately \$1 million in each of the last three calendar years, which are used to match the Pittman-Robertson funds at a 1:3 ratio; therefore, should the surcharge sunset, the state would lose nearly \$4 million per year for IM activities.

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REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER asked what the benefit of ending the sunset would be.

MR. GRASSER replied that a benefit would be having the surety of appropriation each year. He said that if a legislature doesn't support subsistence hunting, there could be a vote to not continue the sunset to a later date. He said that this bill would ensure Alaskans always have a food source.

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REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN asked what the current sunset date is.

MR. GRASSER replied that the sunset date is the end of this calendar year.

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN said that she wonders if the Pittman-Robertson Act leverage is specific to the IM, because by doing away with its sunset, it's an additional \$10 charge on the fishing or hunting licenses. She asked whether the state would have the same leverage for Pittman-Robertson Act funds by increasing the price of a license by \$10 should the surcharge be allowed to sunset.

MR. GRASSER responded that he believes it's important to have the surcharges in place. He said that it's been approximately 20 years between license fee increases, and, while the surcharge could be eliminated and the license fee increased, there would exist no mandate to ensure administration of the IM responsibilities. He said, "The surcharge is a dedicated fund within a dedicated fund."

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN said that she supports the bill, but the surcharge is permanent, and if there comes a time when IM is no longer necessary, there would still exist in statute a mandate for an IM surcharge, separate from ADF&G license fees. She noted the administrative costs associated with the surcharge and management, and said that not all hunting districts need intensive management.

MR. GRASSER noted that there are places identified by the Board of Game where IM is not taking place; however, there are still activities including research that are made possible by the Pittman-Robertson fund. He added that is not to say that IM will not be taking place in those areas in the future; therefore, he maintained, the surcharge should be kept.

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REPRESENTATIVE FIELDS asked how much of the research and management funds have been put towards expansion of tick range and the threat to moose.

MR. GRASSER said that he would get the information.

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REPRESENTATIVE CRONK noted the Upper Tanana/Forty Mile Advisory Committee and said that he supports that these funds go directly

to management, as opposed to a general fund which could be spent in other areas.

1:19:16 PM

SENATOR REVAK said that SB 22 would leverage federal funds to include "everything from controlled burns to habitat."

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CHAIR PATKOTAK opened public testimony on SB 22.

1:20:14 PM

JOHN STURGEON, Director, Safari Club International, Alaska Chapter, testified in support of SB 22 and noted that the surcharge has been of great assistance to ADF&G in the proper management of wildlife resources. He gave a brief history and explanation of the Intensive Management Law and said that without the funds to properly manage wildlife as a food source, populations could be reduced or eliminated. He noted the 2016 addition of the IM surcharge to the hunting licenses and said that because IM programs had proven successful in increasing caribou and moose populations, hunters requested the surcharge to ensure that funds were dedicated and available for IM activities and to carry out projects as seen fit by the state without interference from the federal government. He noted that the surcharge existence makes available other funds that can leverage the federal Pittman-Robertson Act funds for research and other necessary activities. He explained that hunters in Alaska recognize the value of proper IM, and most "that pay this surcharge do so without hesitation or regret."

1:23:00 PM

KEVIN KEHOE, President, Alaska Wild Sheep Foundation (AK WSF), testified in support of SB 22. He said AK WSF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation based in Anchorage with more than 1,000 followers across Alaska. Its mission is to enhance wild sheep populations, promote scientific wildlife management, educate the public on wild sheep, and protect and improve sheep hunting and viewing opportunities in Alaska. He said AK WSF fulfills its mission primarily by raising funds through various donations, raffles, and auctions; its parent organization has contributed more than \$2 million to ADF&G for wildlife management, which, then paired with the Pittman-Robertson Act funding equates to more than \$8 million on the ground for conservation.

MR. KEHOE said AK WSF fully supported the original license increase in 2017 and strongly advocates for full funding of ADF&G and a user pay system. Without reauthorization of the IM surcharge, he said, ADF&G will not have the funds to conduct the intensive management studies and programs so vital to wildlife management efforts over the last five years. The existing surcharge creates a revenue stream for a mandated program that exists in statute that does not take general fund dollars. He warned that a failure to fund this program could result in funds raised by AK WSF and other conservation organizations being used to fund the basic mission of ADF&G rather than funding enhanced conservation efforts. He encouraged the committee to pass the bill.

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SAM ROHRER, President, Alaska Professional Hunters Association (APHA), testified in support of SB 22. He stated that IM programs put food on the tables of Alaskans and help to meet subsistence needs. He said the majority of hunting guides live in rural areas and understand the importance of good populations of moose, caribou and deer to eat; non-resident clients understand, as well. He explained that IM programs, as critical management tools, require extensive population assessments, research, and analysis, and these efforts cost money. He said APHA was part of the coalition that in 2015 rallied behind former Representative Dave Talerico's legislation that raised hunting license and tag fees which, in addition, to doubling non-resident fees, created a revenue stream for IM funding. This IM surcharge has become a critical revenue stream to support healthy and productive ungulate populations statewide. He stated that APHA supports the current IM surcharge of \$10 for residents and \$30 for non-residents, and the association asks the committee to support SB 22.

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CHAIR PATKOTAK, after ascertaining that no one else wished to testify, closed public testimony on SB 22.

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SENATOR REVAK, in closing, noted that there is significant hunting tourism from out of state, and out-of-state license fees are very important to ADF&G.

[SB 22 was held over.]

[1:28:42 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Resources Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 1:29 p.m.